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What They Do

Construction Laborers dig trenches, mix and place concrete, erect scaffolds, set braces to support the sides of excavations, and clean and prepare construction sites to rid it of any dangers, such as rubble and debris, asbestos, and other hazardous waste. They use tools of all types: air hammers, earth tampers, cement mixers, small mechanical hoists, surveying and measuring equipment, and a variety of other equipment. They may assist other craft workers such as carpenters, plasterers, and masons.

At heavy and highway construction sites, Construction Laborers clear and prepare highway work zones and rights of way; install traffic barricades, cones, and markers; and control traffic passing near, in, and around work zones. They also install sewer, water, and storm drain pipes, and place concrete and asphalt on roads.

Construction Laborers at hazardous waste sites safely sample, identify, handle, pack, and transport asbestos, lead, radioactive waste, and other harmful materials, and clean and decontaminate equipment, buildings, and other enclosed structures.

Tasks

- ▶ Apply caulking compounds by hand or using caulking guns.
- ▶ Build and position forms for pouring concrete, and dismantle forms after use, using saws, hammers, nails, or bolts.
- ▶ Clean and prepare construction sites to eliminate possible hazards.
- ▶ Control traffic passing near, in, and around work zones.
- ▶ Dig ditches or trenches, backfill excavations, and compact and level earth to grade specifications, using picks, shovels, pneumatic tampers, and rakes.
- ▶ Erect and disassemble scaffolding, shoring, braces, traffic barricades, ramps, and other temporary structures.
- ▶ Grind, scrape, sand, or polish surfaces such as concrete, marble, terrazzo, or wood flooring, using abrasive tools or machines.
- ▶ Install sewer, water, and storm drain pipes, using pipe-laying machinery and laser guidance equipment.

Construction Laborers

Construction Careers

- ▶ Load, unload, and identify building materials, machinery, and tools, and distribute them to the appropriate locations, according to project plans and specifications.
- ▶ Measure, mark, and record openings and distances to lay out areas where construction work will be performed.

Detailed descriptions of this occupation may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.

Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- ▶ Equipment Selection — Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
- ▶ Building and Construction — Knowledge of materials, methods, and the tools involved in the construction or repair of houses, buildings, or other structures such as highways and roads.
- ▶ Mechanical — Knowledge of machines and tools, including their designs, uses, repair, and maintenance.
- ▶ Engineering and Technology — Knowledge of the practical application of engineering science and technology. This includes applying principles, techniques, procedures, and equipment to the design and production of various goods and services.
- ▶ Design — Knowledge of design techniques, tools, and principles involved in production of precision technical plans, blueprints, drawings, and models.
- ▶ Mathematics — Knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications.
- ▶ Static Strength — The ability to exert maximum muscle force to lift, push, pull, or carry objects.
- ▶ Trunk Strength — The ability to use your abdominal and lower back muscles to support part of the body repeatedly or continuously over time without 'giving out' or fatiguing.
- ▶ Explosive Strength — The ability to use short bursts of muscle force to propel oneself (as in jumping or sprinting), or to throw an object.
- ▶ Manual Dexterity — The ability to quickly move your hand, your hand together with your arm, or your two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.

Work Environment

The occupation of Construction Laborer is a dangerous one. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) studies, fatal occupational injury rates for Construction Laborers during 1992–2001 were substantially greater (2.5–3.4 times greater) than those for all construction workers. The BLS studies indicated that, during the same time period, the rates of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses involving days away from work for Construction Laborers during 1992–2001 were consistently greater (1.8–2.7 times greater) than those for all construction workers.

The work is physically demanding. Construction Laborers often lift and carry heavy objects; they bend, kneel, crouch down, or crawl in awkward positions. Construction Laborers may work high in scaffolds or other structures. The work is frequently done outdoors in all weather conditions. They can come into contact with dangerous machinery. They are sometimes exposed to hazardous materials or chemicals and fumes. Construction Laborers may be subjected to foul odors and loud noises.

To avoid injury, workers in these jobs wear safety clothing, such as gloves, hardhats, protective chemical suits, and devices to protect their eyes, lungs, or hearing. While working in underground

construction, Construction Laborers must be especially alert to safety procedures and must deal with a variety of hazards.

Many Construction Laborers belong to the Laborers' International Union of North America.

California's Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupation across all industries.

Standard Occupational Classification	Estimated Number of Workers 2004	Estimated Number of Workers 2014	Average Annual Openings	2006 Wage Range (per hour)
Construction Laborers				
47-2061	130,200	144,300	3,140	\$11.07 to \$20.74

Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.

Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Trends

This is an occupation with many workers statewide, but will grow slower than average compared to all occupations in California during the projections period. However, growth will be fueled in large measure by the increased demand for new housing in California. There will be 17,300 job opportunities for Construction Laborers due to workers retiring, going into another occupation, or separating from the occupation for other reasons.

Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Construction Laborers usually follow one of the following training paths:

- ▶ Formal apprenticeship
- ▶ Vocational school
- ▶ Extensive on-the-job training

Most Construction Laborers gain their skills by watching and learning from experienced workers. Those who learn the trade on the job usually start as Construction Helpers.

Local apprenticeship programs are operated under guidelines established by the Laborers-Associated General Contractors of America Education and Training Fund. Apprenticeships typically require at least 4,000 hours of supervised on-the-job training and approximately 400 hours of classroom training. It can take from two to four years to complete the apprenticeship. Workers who use dangerous equipment or handle toxic chemicals usually receive training in safety awareness and procedures.

Apprentices must be at least 18 years old and physically fit to work. Many apprenticeship programs require a high school diploma or the equivalent.

Vocational classes in welding, construction, and other general building skills can give a leg up to those who want to become Construction Laborers.

Construction Laborers

Recommended High School Course Work

High school courses in science, physics, chemistry, and mathematics are helpful.

Where Do I Find the Job?

Direct application to employers is an effective job search method for Construction Laborers. Labor unions and apprenticeship councils are good places to start a job search.

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov to locate employers in your area. Search using keywords from the following construction industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- ▶ Commercial Building
- ▶ Highway, Street, and Bridge
- ▶ Industrial Building
- ▶ New Multifamily Housing
- ▶ New Single-Family Housing
- ▶ Power/Communication System
- ▶ Residential Remodelers
- ▶ Water and Sewer System

For local listings of contractors, search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- ▶ Construction Clean-Up Contractors
- ▶ Construction Consultants
- ▶ Construction Management

Where Can The Job Lead?

Experience as a Construction Laborer may lead to advancement to positions such as supervisor or construction superintendent. Some Construction Laborers become skilled craftworkers, either through extensive on-the-job training or apprenticeships in a craft. A few become independent contractors.

Other Sources of Information

Laborers' International Union of North America
www.liuna.org

Laborers-Associated General Contractors Education and Training Fund
www.laborerslearn.org

California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Apprenticeship Standards
www.dir.ca.gov/das

California Department of Consumer Affairs, Contractors State License Board
www.cslb.ca.gov